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ABSTRACT

The process of coordinating a successful transition from preschool to kindergarten for the child with special needs is examined. The following steps are considered: (1) identify differences between preschool and kindergarten that may adversely affect a child's adjustment to kindergarten; (2) prepare each child for transition by teaching behavior routines and skills during preschool that will facilitate the child's subsequent adjustment to kindergarten; (3) consider alternative arrangements in kindergarten to accommodate and train needed behaviors and skills not acquired by the child in preschool; and (4) establish and maintain communication with the kindergarten before, during, and after each child's transition. To establish and maintain communication after each child's transition, it is advocated that the preschool provide suggestions and information regarding teaching strategies, behavior management, and curriculum activities that were used successfully when the child was in preschool. To provide a framework for assessing the transition process, questions are posed regarding the following areas: classroom composition, teacher attention and reinforcement of the students, the physical arrangement of the kindergarten and preschool classes, the child's daily schedule at each level, classroom rules and routines, academics, self-help skills, and support systems. A list of approximately 25 references is appended, along with a sample case study. (SEW)

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TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Susan A. Fowler

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TRANSITION FROM PRESCHOOL TO KINDERGARTEN FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Chapter for: Allen, K. E. and Goetz, E. M. (Eds.) Problems in Early Childhood Education. Aspen Publishing Co., 1982.

Five-year-old David has been a student in a preschool class designed for children with learning and behavior problems. He entered the class at the age of three after a local day care referred him for serious behavior problems, which their staff could not manage. When David joined the special preschool he was aggressive toward peers, refused to follow many of the teacher's instructions, and was unwilling to try new activities or tasks. As a result of intensive programming and careful planning by the special classroom staff, David has learned to interact pleasantly and constructively with peers and teachers, has acquired new skills, and is often eager to try new activities. David appears ready to leave the special preschool and enter a regular kindergarten.

David's classroom and other preschools enrolling children identified as at-risk for handicapping conditions, have prepared many children to enter normal kindergartens. Children who previously did not have the prerequisite skills or conduct for enrollment in a regular class acquire these skills through intensive instruction and the specialized curriculum provided in therapeutic preschool classes (Rowbury, 1980). Even so the transition into kindergarten can be difficult for some of these youngsters. New friends must be made; new skills must be learned; new rules must be followed. Some children will respond to their new classroom with enthusiasm and excitement. Others will respond less positively, showing signs of stress that range from timidness and tears to upset stomachs and tantrums; in extreme cases, school phobia may result. Children with a history of behavior problems are more likely to exhibit conduct and learning problems during their transition into kindergarten than are other children. New behavior problems may appear or former patterns of responding may reemerge. David again is a likely candidate for the label of "class problem" unless a coordinated effort is made between the preschool, kindergarten staff and home to ensure continuity in his educa-

tional program (Allen, 1978).

Guaranteeing a successful transition from preschool to the public school for David and other children like him should be as crucial a goal as the original remediation of the handicapping condition (e.g., Anderson-Innman, 1981). Researchers and educators have noted that some children do not consistently generalize the skills and behaviors acquired in the special classes to the regular classes and that behavior changes that initially transfer do not always maintain (e.g., Walker & Hops, 1976; Walker, Hops, & Johnson, 1975; Wildman & Wildman, 1975). Yet little attention has been paid thus far to problems related to transition. Children who do not succeed in the new classroom typically are regarded as "just not ready," and are returned to more specialized environments for further remediation which may or may not facilitate subsequent transition efforts.

How can a preschool staff prepare David and other children like him for kindergarten so that their entry into the public school system is positive and their year successful? No one can guarantee that David will interact pleasantly with all classmates, and follow all teacher instructions; even the best behaved children occasionally present problems. Sufficient planning and training to prepare children for differences between preschool and kindergarten, however, should increase each child's chance for successful adjustment. Such planning should include two goals: Training the prerequisite skills needed for a successful kindergarten experience and training for generalization of these skills from preschool to kindergarten. To train effectively for generalization, teachers must be familiar with the future classrooms. Some children's preschool experience may differ from their kindergarten experience in many respects; others may differ in only a few respects. The differences

between preschool and kindergarten that interfere with the child's successful adjustment, however, should be identified. These differences can be minimized with adequate planning and communication between the preschool and kindergarten staff. Children can be taught many of the behaviors or skills identified as critical for participation in kindergarten before they enter that program. Additionally, support services can be provided in kindergarten to facilitate the children's acquisition of classroom routines, skills, or behaviors that were not taught in preschool.

The following steps are involved in coordinating a child's successful transition from preschool to kindergarten:

1) Identify differences between preschool and kindergarten that may adversely affect a child's adjustment to kindergarten. Differences may be assessed by the preschool teacher through conversations with the kindergarten teacher and other school personnel and by observations of the kindergarten class;
2) Prepare each child for transition by teaching behavior routines and skills during preschool that will facilitate the child's subsequent adjustment to kindergarten. In addition, consider alternative arrangements in kindergarten to accommodate and train needed behaviors and skills not acquired by the child in preschool;
3) Establish and maintain communication with the kindergarten before, during, and after each child's transition. The preschool can provide suggestions and information regarding teaching strategies, behavior management, and curriculum activities that were used successfully when the child was in preschool.

Each of these steps will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

I. Identify differences between preschool and kindergarten:

Outstanding differences between two classrooms can be obtained readily by observing both classrooms and comparing them along several dimensions. This information then can be supplemented by interviews with the classroom staff. It is important to note that many differences are not critical and that some differences may affect one child but not another. Obtaining a composite sketch of the current and future classrooms and delineating the potentially relevant variations, however, will provide information for decisions regarding individual children's readiness for kindergarten.

The following questionnaire sections were prepared by Fowler (1980) to discriminate differences between preschool, kindergarten, and special education classes.

Classroom Composition:

1. How many adults, teachers, aides and volunteers work in the classroom?
2. How many children are in the classroom?
3. Do the numbers of adults and children in kindergarten differ from preschool? (The adult/child ratio is the number of adults to the number of children.) The typical preschool contains 2 or 3 adults and 18 to 20 children. The typical kindergarten contains 1 or 2 adults and 20 to 30 children.
4. Are other children from the special child's preschool likely to attend this kindergarten?

An increase in teacher-child ratio may pose problems to children who learn readily only with individualized instruction or who require close and frequent teacher supervision. The reduced level of teacher attention and availability in larger classes conducted by only one teacher may adversely influence some children's classroom behavior and learning rate. Thus, an important transition goal for some children will be to prepare them to

work independently when access to a teacher is limited or the teacher is temporarily unavailable (Plummer, 1975). Teaching children to function successfully with fewer teacher instructions, prompts, praise or attention requires time. However, for older preschool children the final months of preschool can be used to gradually reduce the frequency of teacher support (e.g., Koegel & Rincover, 1974). Teaching children to solicit teacher attention in an appropriate fashion should be another goal. Children need to know how to request assistance or obtain the teacher's attention without disrupting the classroom (e.g., Knapczyk & Livingston, 1974; Bondy & Erickson, 1976).

The number of new classmates in kindergarten may pose a second concern for some children. Children with less advanced social skills may have a difficult time meeting and befriending their many new classmates. Attempting to arrange that each child enters kindergarten with one or two familiar friends may ease the transition for these children. If children in the preschool will be attending different kindergartens, the teacher might advise the parents to acquaint their child with neighborhood children likely to be in the same kindergarten class. For example, Annie was a language-delayed child who made friends slowly. By the end of her first preschool year, she had several friends with whom she frequently shared activities; nonetheless, she continued to respond in a shy fashion to new children and to children in the other preschool classrooms. The teacher, who was concerned about Annie's social adjustment to kindergarten, discovered that none of Annie's preschool friends would be attending the same school. The teacher thus advised the parents to invite one or two neighborhood children who would be in Annie's future class to play at home with Annie before kindergarten began. The parents followed the suggestion, Annie made several new friends and entered kindergarten with two familiar companions. The parents reported that she enjoyed her

kindergarten experience and eventually developed additional friendships.

Teacher attention and reinforcement:

1. How frequently do teachers attend to the students with praise, instructions or reprimands?
   E.g., how frequently do teachers provide praise: every minute, every few minutes, or only at the end of an activity?

2. Do teachers provide special rewards or back-up activities for good behavior?
   E.g., additional free time, access to the art center, good work certificates, positive home notes.

3. What are the consequences for disruptive or inappropriate behavior?
   E.g., temporary removal from the activity, loss of recess or free time.

Just as children may behave differently between home and school, so may they behave differently between two classrooms. One way to increase the transfer of desirable performance from preschool to kindergarten is to use similar rules and reinforcement systems (e.g., Wehman, Abramson, & Norman, 1977). If rewards were provided for certain behaviors in preschool, then similar rewards initially may be necessary to remind the children to perform the same appropriate behavior in kindergarten. For example, Jerry responded politely to adult and peer requests in preschool but frequently responded unpleasantly to similar requests in kindergarten. In preschool Jerry had received a star on a chart at the end of each activity if he "behaved like a gentleman," i.e., complied with teacher requests and used polite forms of speech in responding to such requests. The stars could be exchanged at the end of the day for five minutes of free-play time. His preschool teacher suggested that a similar chart be introduced temporarily in kindergarten to reduce his disruptive behavior. The suggestion was successful; Jerry's rude behavior quickly disappeared when the chart was reintroduced. Why? Jerry's rude responses may have been an easy way to gain attention in his new class. Introduction of the chart, however, quickly shifted the teacher's attention away from his undesirable behavior to more polite behavior.

The teacher now ignored Jerry's unpleasantness but praised and rewarded his politeness. Jerry quickly noticed that his teacher and classmates paid as much or more attention to him when he was pleasant as when he was rude. Finally, the chart also reminded Jerry that the polite speech was expected in kindergarten just as it had been in preschool. Another strategy that might have been tried before transition, would have been to reduce gradually the use of stars in the preschool, while maintaining Jerry's appropriate responding with teacher praise.

Researchers and practitioners frequently have noted the importance of reducing reinforcement schedules once a desirable behavior has been developed and an undesirable behavior has been reduced (e.g., Allen, 1972; Stokes & Baer, 1977). Simplifying the form of reinforcement (e.g., shifting from tokens or stars to praise) once a behavior is established, providing reinforcement on an intermittent, less predictable basis, and gradually delaying reinforcement are three techniques preschool teachers can use to facilitate children's maintenance and generalization of new behaviors (cf. Jones & Kazdin, 1975; Kazdin & Polster, 1973: Fowler & Baer, 1981). If the form of reinforcement can be simplified to praise and then the frequency of praise reduced, even occasional praise from the new teacher is likely to maintain the child's desirable behavior in the new classroom.

Physical arrangement:

Is the physical arrangement of the kindergarten class different from the preschool? For example:

1. Do children sit on individual mats or on a group rug?
2. Do children work at tables or at desks?
3. Are work and play areas clearly separated?
4. Are play areas visible from work areas?
5. Is the bathroom or drinking fountain adjacent to the classroom or down the hallway?

Although many children adjust as quickly to a new classroom as to the rearrangement of their familiar classroom, some children do not. Their adjustment may be hampered by differences in the physical aspects of the new classroom that require new responses or behaviors by the child (e.g., Rogers-Warren & Wedel, 1980). For example, the behavioral requirements of sitting on individual mats versus sitting on a large group rug are quite different. Individual mats define a child's space for the child; if the mats are spaced apart, children are spaced apart automatically and thus have few opportunities to touch, tickel or elbow one another during group instruction. In contrast, when one large rug is used, children often crowd together. If the preschool uses individual mats and the kindergarten uses a group rug, it may be necessary to teach children, who are considered distractable or overactive, to manage themselves in crowded spaces. Alternatively, the preschool teacher might recommend that the kindergarten teacher initially define space for these children in the new class. Taping X's on the group rug and instructing the students to sit on an X is one simple way to define space. After the children are accustomed to spacing themselves apart, the X's could be removed.

Traffic patterns within the classroom should be considered carefully, too, as they may affect the way in which children participate (e.g., Safford, 1978). For example, if children are instructed through a learning-center approach, attention should be directed to the boundaries established between centers. If boundaries are not clear (defined either by space, furniture or movable barriers) then children may be tempted to move materials inappropriately from one center to another or to change centers before they are instructed to do so. The proximity of certain centers to one another should be considered too. If academic instruction centers are located near play centers, the auditory and visual distractions offered by the play center may compete with the

attention of children working in the academic center. Arranging centers so that distractions are minimized is particularly important for children who distract easily, have hearing impairments, or are slow learners.

The effects of new physical arrangements on a child's adjustment are not always easy to anticipate. For example, the location and use of separate toilet facilities affected one child's adjustment to her new kindergarten. The class attended by the child, Eve, did not contain a bathroom; instead, separate boys' rooms and girls' rooms were located in a hallway around the corner from the kindergarten. Children were allowed to use the bathroom as needed through the day. In preschool, Eve's classmates had used the same toilet facility, located within the classroom. Thus, Eve was not familiar with the practice of separate boys' and girls' rooms, and consequently used the boys' room occasionally during the first week of school. Eve's use of the boys' room resulted in her being teased by her classmates and reprimanded by her teacher. As a result, Eve became upset and did not use either bathroom for the remainder of the school year. Her confusion and subsequent embarrassment could have been prevented if the kindergarten teacher had explained the separate use of bathrooms, and if Eve had been occasionally exposed to the use of different bathrooms before her entry into the program.

Daily schedule:

1. Is the kindergarten in session longer than the preschool?
2. How many minutes do children spend:
   a) in large group (singing, sharing, listening to stories, having snacks)?
   b) in small groups?
   c) doing academic work and fine motor activities?
   d) in free play activities?
   e) in recess and large motor activity?
   f) in moving from one scheduled activity to another (for example, lining up for recess, waiting to be called from large group to small group)?

The kindergarten schedule may appear very similar or very different from the preschool's schedule. If the schedule differs, the preschool teacher should consider how it might affect specific children. For example, a preschool teacher who scheduled only one large group activity a day, discovered that the kindergarten, which many of the preschoolers would attend, contained three lengthy, large group periods. The preschool teacher preferred her schedule and did not consider the difference in schedule and teaching style to be important for most of the children, but was concerned about one child, Micky. Micky was easily distracted, rarely responded to group questions, and when he responded, spoke almost inaudibly. The teacher decided that an important transition goal for Micky would be to increase his participation in the one large group during preschool. If he attended to and participated more in the preschool group, he probably would be able to transfer these behaviors to the kindergarten, despite the difference in the number of large group activities. The teacher's strategy was successful. Micky learned to

participate at a more consistent rate in his one large group during preschool. He later successfully transferred these participation skills to the several large groups conducted in kindergarten.

The sequence of activities in one kindergarten schedule appeared to be the factor behind another child's transition difficulties. Tim was an efficient worker during a twenty-minute preacademic period in preschool. He worked independently and appeared to enjoy his tasks. In kindergarten, however, he dawdled over many of the same tasks, frequently sought assistance and appeared to need the allotted forty minutes to finish his work. The kindergarten teacher considered Tim to be a slow learner and hesitated to give him the extra work that many other class members were completing. What factors were responsible for Tim's poor performance? In preschool, Tim could leave the work table when he finished his tasks and return to a free choice activity in the play area. In contrast, during kindergarten the only other activities available were additional tasks or books. The children went to recess after the forty-minute work period if they had finished their assigned tasks. Tim's work rate had slowed to fill the available time. However, an increase in the selection of optional activities available when the children finished their work, and praise for efficient work completion once again increased Tim's attentiveness and productivity. As a result the teacher was able to increase the number of academic tasks that Tim finished each day.

Classroom rules and routines:

1. Are children required to raise their hands? If so when?
   a) for permission to speak
   b) when they have finished a task
   c) to seek assistance
2. Do children speak out? If so when? (e.g., volunteering answers in large group)
3. During what activities can children talk to their classmates and move about the room?
4. Do children have free or limited access to the bathroom, water fountain, pencil sharpener, supplies?
5. Do children manage all or some of their own materials (e.g., crayons, paper, paste) or do they use community materials? What materials do they manage?
6. Do children walk in line single-file or double-file? Do they hold hands?

Differences in a few classroom rules can cause confusion and produce seemingly oppositional behavior during the initial sessions of kindergarten. Unfortunately, this may set up a series of undesirable teacher-child interactions that in a few cases could affect future interactions. Common differences between preschool and kindergarten often involve rules regarding classroom conversation, movement around the room, and hand-raising (Plummer, 1976). Many preschools do not emphasize public school types of classroom rules, such as hand raising, walking single-file, working quietly; such rules run contrary to a philosophy that preschool is a time for children to explore, to gain autonomy, and to socialize with one another. If the kindergarten is highly structured, in terms of rules and routine, however, and the preschool is not, occasionally introducing more structure to the preschool may facilitate the children's later transition. A study conducted by Carden-Smith, Fowler and Soknick (1981) on the kindergarten adjustment of children with special needs, suggests

that 60% of the children's behavior that was viewed by teachers as noncompliant were rule infractions. Yet many of these rules did not exist in the children's preschool. A frequent complaint reported by Fowler (1976) focused on the children's conduct while walking in line. One child, Tina, walked appropriately only if the teacher held her hand or if she walked in the front of the line. At other times, Tina grabbed her classmates' hands or walked out of line. Tina had never walked in a single-file line before kindergarten; in her former preschool, children never formed a line to go outdoors, but always walked in small groups, holding a partner's hand or teachers hand. Tina was maintaining this routine, albeit inappropriately. Occasional line-walking in preschool might have made the routine more familiar to her and facilitated her compliance with such an expectation.

A second common difference between preschool and kindergarten involves the child's management of personal materials (Brackman, 1976). Frequently, crayons, scissors and glue are community property in preschool. In kindergarten, children often are expected to care for their own materials and keep them in lockers. Allowing older preschoolers to manage and store certain classroom materials in their bin or locker may prepare them for management of gym clothes, library books, workbooks, school papers, and other materials introduced in kindergarten.

Academics:

1. Are there minimum competency levels? Is there a kindergarten readiness checklist?

2. What academic subjects are taught?

3. What curriculum materials most typically are used? For example, are math concepts taught through manipulative materials, such as cuisennaire rods, through worksheets, or both?

4. Are lessons taught in large or small groups?

5. How do children respond during instruction?
   a) Do children recite answers? For what subjects? (e.g., alphabet, numbers)
   b) How often and for what subjects do children replay as a group to teacher questions?
   c) How often and for what subjects do children respond individually to teacher questions?
   d) How often and for what subjects do children produce written responses?
      1) What response formats are used?
         -do children circle the right answer, color in the right answer, mark (X) the right answer, mark (X) the wrong answer?

To ensure continuity in a child's educational program, differences between the preschool and kindergarten instruction and assessment methods should be determined if methods used in kindergarten vary on several dimensions from those used in the preschool. These differences may prevent some children from demonstrating the information or skills they have previously acquired. Furthermore, these children may experience difficulty acquiring new information and skills (e.g., Rincover & Koegel, 1977). For example, children accustomed to individual instruction may not learn as quickly or as well under group instruction. During group instruction they may receive fewer prompts to attend, fewer opportunities to respond, and less praise for responding. In addition, the instruction rate usually is paced for the group and not for the individual child. Thus, it may be necessary to teach these children to attend and to respond in a group situation before they are expected to acquire new information through group instruction (cf. Koegel & Rincover, 1974).

Children also may not transfer some concepts across different curriculum materials. For example, in preschool Stan easily and accurately counted groups of blocks, ranging in number from 1 to 10. In kindergarten, however, he could not count groups of five or more objects when the objects were depicted on a worksheet. Stan always touched and then moved the blocks as he counted them, as a way of remembering what was counted and what was left to count. He could not move the pictures on the worksheet. Stan's kindergarten teacher at first thought that Stan was not working hard enough as Stan's report from preschool indicated he could count objects up through ten. Several days and worksheets later, Stan still was making errors with larger numbers. The kindergarten teacher decided that the preschool report was inaccurate, disregarded the other information contained in it and assigned Stan to another math group.

A similar misunderstanding occurred with Dana, a child who exhibited some emotional problems. She had learned to classify common objects on a worksheet in preschool by placing an X on the objects that were the same. Her kindergarten worksheet instructions were different; she was told to mark with an X the objects that did not belong. Dana was confused by the change in instructions. For several days she marked her worksheet inaccurately and finally began scribbling on her worksheet. As a result, she was placed in a group well below her skill level. Exposing Dana to several response formats (e.g., circle the same, draw a line between answers) in preschool might have lessened her confusion, and made transfer to another new response format (X the wrong answer) easier.

Alternatively, Dana and Mike's preschool report could have specified the exact conditions under which the children exhibited their skill. Mike's new teacher probably would have recognized that the ability to count concrete, maneuverable objects is less advanced than the skill of counting objects

depicted on a worksheet. Likewise, Dana's kindergarten teacher might have explained the workbook instructions more carefully and frequently and thus minimized Dana's confusion.

Self-help skills:

What self-help skills do most children demonstrate?

a) dressing independently for outdoors?

b) shoe-tying?

c) drinking milk through a straw?

d) hand washing? nose care?

Training self-help skills should be a transition goal for all preschoolers, but particularly for children with special needs. Children with special needs will stand out as markedly different from their classmates if they do not demonstrate basic self-help skills. This distinction they may create further differences. In addition, their lack of skill may be viewed as an inconvenience for an already busy teacher (Allen, 1980). The reaction of Max's kindergarten teacher may be typical of other teachers. "I don't mind scheduling extra tutorial time with Max to help him with his printing and math, but I do mind the class always having to wait for him when he needs help putting on his outdoor clothes. The other children become very impatient with him and so do I. I shouldn't have to worry about his self-help skills." A lack of self-help skills made Max, a child with mild cerebral palsy, appear different to the other children and was the one deficit that almost compromised his teacher's willingness to accommodate Max in the classroom. If the kindergarten teacher places a high value on independence, then these skills could become goals in preschool and at home. In addition, the kindergarten teacher might consider asking children in the classroom to tutor or assist one another

in certain skill areas. Self-help skills seem to be an excellent target for peer-tutoring (cf. LeBlanc, Etzel, & Domash, 1978).

Support systems:

1. What support services are available to the classroom? E.g.:
   a) resource room assistance
   b) speech therapy
   c) adaptive physical education
   d) physical therapy
   e) paraprofessional aide
2. Do parents work as aides? cooperate in home reward systems?
3. Do older students or classmates tutor children with special needs?

Some classrooms have access to many support systems and some have access to few such services. If a child is likely to need support services, those available should be identified and additional ones requested, if needed, prior to the child's first day in kindergarten. Advance notification may be necessary to ensure that the child has sufficient access to special services. Some teachers are willing to develop other support systems too, that might facilitate a child's adjustment to kindergarten. For instance, parents can provide an important source of support to the child and teacher. If home reward systems have been established in preschool, then transferring the home reward system to kindergarten may facilitate the transfer of many desirable behaviors from preschool to kindergarten. For example, in preschool Heather received a good report on days when she completed her academic tasks without complaining or disturbing her peers during the academic period. Her parents provided small rewards at home for each good report. The rewards typically consisted of a special activity (reading a favorite story, having her hair

braided, watching a favorite TV program). The home-report was important to Heather and she worked hard in preschool to earn one each day. When Heather began kindergarten she no longer earned home-reports and soon many of her earlier maladaptive behaviors reappeared. She was disruptive during learning centers, rarely completed her assignments, and frequently complained that they were too hard. Heather's parents suggested that the home-report be reinstated. As a consequence, Heather's school behavior immediately improved. Furthermore, her parents remained interested in her school performance and continued to provide support to the teacher in the form of positive feedback and encouragement.

Likewise, some parents can supplement certain academic lessons with home tutoring. A simple tutoring procedure that was combined with story-reading was developed by Wedel and Fowler (1981) for use by parents of kindergarten children, who were slow to learn the alphabet and basic sight words. In this procedure, parents worked each week with the three or four letters or words which the child needed to learn. Each parent tutored their child four evenings a week while reading their child a story. During the story, the parent stopped occasionally (a total of 10 or 15 times) to ask the child to find or identify the letters or words selected for tutoring. At the end of each week the teacher tested the children to determine which letters or words had been learned and then provided the parents with a revised list for the following week. Both children and parents reported that they enjoyed the procedure and the children successfully learned the alphabet or basic sight words over a three to four month period.

II. Prepare Children for Transition

Differences between preschool and kindergarten that are identified through the classroom assessments and through conversations between the respective

teachers suggests what preparations are needed for a child's adjustment to kindergarten. As indicated in the previous section, many of these preparations can be made before the child begins kindergarten; others can be made only after the child enters kindergarten. The preschool preparations are not intended to turn the preschool into an early kindergarten; rather, much of the transition training can be accomplished in the context of typical preschool activities. For example, preschools can prepare their older children for the increased independence of kindergarten by:

- decreasing and delaying teacher attention and praise
- reducing teacher instructions and prompts
- asking the older children to state or repeat the classroom rules at the beginning of class

Teachers can prepare children for increased responsibilities by:

- assigning roles such as clean-up leader or line leader
- designating the care of certain classroom materials to different children

Children's attention spans can be increased gradually to meet the demands of longer lesson periods in kindergarten by:

- gradually increasing the amount of time children are expected to stay at a free choice center or remain in large groups
- teaching the children to find appropriate alternative uses for materials when children still have time left in an activity (e.g., sort, label, count colored blocks when the child is "tired" of building)
- encouraging children to repeat a task with new materials (e.g., trade puzzles with a friend when the first puzzle is finished)

When preschool children lack some of the skills expected of incoming kindergarteners, these skills can be incorporated into the preschool curriculum. Many of the kindergarten readiness skills do not need to be introduced in academic-like situations however; they can be practiced within the normal routines and activities of preschool. For example, if children are expected

to cut with scissors, hold a pencil properly, draw simple shapes, label colors and count to ten, then these skills and concepts can be introduced first during supervised free play and art time. During the final months of preschool, teachers can arrange academic activities, similar to activities in kindergarten, to ensure that the children will exhibit these skills in the context of a structured lesson or with curriculum materials typical of kindergarten. Most children are eager to "practice school" and welcome such academic-like activities in preschool.

III. Adapt the Kindergarten to Accommodate Special Needs

To minimize the differences between preschool and kindergarten and to accommodate the needs of special children, changes can be made in the kindergarten class during the first weeks of school as well. Several examples of accommodations made by kindergarten teachers to facilitate the adjustment of children are described below:

1) Use behavior programs initially developed and implemented in the preschool: If the preschool used a daily home-report and reward system for promoting appropriate classroom behavior (e.g., task completion) and for decreasing undesirable behaviors (e.g., inattentiveness, noncompliance) then reimplementing the same system for a short time in kindergarten may prove advantageous. Since the child is familiar with the rules and rewards of the system, he or she is likely to exhibit the desirable behaviors that produce the positive consequences. Thus, the system immediately prompts the child to behave appropriately in the new setting and rewards such behavior. Furthermore, the child's attention is focused on his or her good behavior and so the child has little opportunity or incentive to slip back to the former behaviors that were inappropriate but so effective at gaining teacher attention. Such a system may serve too as a prompt to the teacher to reward the child for good performance, thus initiating

a cycle of positive interactions between teacher and child.

2) Use familiar preschool curriculum as supplements to the kindergarten curriculum: The presence of a few familiar activities or tasks can be important to many children in providing continuity between their preschool and kindergarten experiences. Singing familiar songs, or finding a few favorite books, puzzles, or toys in the kindergarten room can reassure a child who has just entered a new class. Preschool and kindergartens often contain many similar materials and games. Determining what songs and games already are known by a special child and using those activities during the first weeks of kindergarten may ensure the child's participation in group activities and ease the child's anxieties about the newness of kindergarten.

3) Group children according to ther ability: Most kindergarten teachers teach their students in groups rather than as a whole class. Grouping arrangements can be critical to a slow learner's participation and success in school. Instructions can be paced more closely to each child's performance, if children are grouped systematically rather than randomly according to their skill level. Skill deficits and learning problems are more likely to be identified quickly and remedial teaching begun under such a system.

4) Introduce parents or high school and college students as aides: The addition of one or two adults to a classroom will facilitate the use of individualized instruction and the application of more systematic and contingent reinforcement systems. Such attention and planning may be essential for children with learning and behavior problems to ensure that they learn the new rules and routines of the classroom and transfer the many behaviors and skills that have been so carefully developed during preschool. As the child adjusts and behaves in a desirable manner, this support can be reduced. An example of this procedure was described recently in a study conducted by Russo and Keogel (1977). In

brief, they provided an autistic child with a therapist during the first weeks of kindergarten so that intensive treatment could be available while the child adjusted to the new classroom. The therapist, using a token system, systematically shaped and reinforced desirable classroom behavior exhibited by the child (i.e., appropriate social interaction, responses to the teacher and the absence of self-stimulation). When the child had demonstrated acceptable levels of appropriate behavior, the therapist began preparations to transfer the token procedure to the teacher. First, the therapist systematically reduced the frequency of token reinforcement by giving tokens on an intermittent basis. Secondly, the therapist provided instructions and training to the teacher on the use of the token system. Finally, the therapist transferred the token procedure to the teacher. During the first week in which the teacher conducted the token program, the therapist took charge of the classroom during parts of the school day so that the teacher would have more time to spend with the autistic child. In addition, throughout the week the therapist provided feedback to the teacher regarding the effectiveness of the teacher's interaction with the child. In the weeks that followed, the therapist maintained regular phone contact with the teacher to monitor the child's progress. The teacher was able to reduce gradually the number of tokens awarded to the child until by the end of the kindergarten year, the child was receiving only two tokens a day. Interestingly, the child did not generalize appropriate classroom behaviors to the first grade; reimplementation of the token procedure by the first grade teacher was necessary to produce the desired school behavior again.

This example is another clear demonstration of the need to consider differences in classroom environments (preschool, kindergarten and subsequent grades) and to provide training prior to or following a child's transition,

if initial differences presented by the new classrooms are to be minimized and successful integration assured.

IV. Establish and maintain communication with the new classroom: Before Transition: Maintaining interaction between the classroom staffs before, during, and after the child's transition can assist the child's adjustment to the new class and the new teacher's adjustment to the child (Grosnick, 1971). Thus, one or more meetings between the preschool and the public school staff and the parents should be scheduled to discuss the child's transition prior to its occurrence. At these meetings the class placement most appropriate for the child should be assessed and, if needed, special services determined. Other topics for discussion should include:

- a summary report of the child's current social and academic skills;
- an estimate of the child's future needs;
- the teacher's interest and willingness to have the child attend the classroom;
- arrangements for parent and child visits to the kindergarten;
- the exchange of teacher visits between the preschool and kindergarten (if such visits have not occurred yet);
- the frequency and form of future contact between the preschool and kindergarten.

A report from the preschool which summarizes the child's performance can be helpful and informative for the parents and for the future teaching staff. A comprehensive report should detail a child's current academic skills and the conditions under which they can be performed (e.g., the curriculum materials used, the degree of teacher guidance required). A list of the child's most recent tasks and descriptions or samples of the tasks may be valuable for the next teacher who may wish to include some of these familiar tasks during the first days of school. Examples of tasks that the child

can master may assist the teacher in determining the child's next sequence of tasks. Suggestions of future tasks by the preschool teacher likewise may be of assistance in determining this sequence. A list of preferred activities, both academic and play, can be useful for both parents and teachers. These activities often can be used as rewards for the child attempting a new or difficult task, either at home or at school. In addition to an academic focus, the report should describe the child's current social skills; for instance, the child's ability to initiate social contacts with unfamiliar as well as with familiar children, and to maintain the interaction. If the child experiences difficulty in certain social situations, these difficulties should be discussed. Likewise, descriptions of other problem behaviors and ways in which they have been managed in preschool can be of benefit to both teachers and parents. The information will provide them with a strategy, proven useful in preschool, which they also may employ. In summary, the report should focus on the child's skills and abilities, since these will serve as the building blocks for future skills and learning. Problem behaviors should be discussed when relevant, and suggestions for managing the problems also should be provided. The following is an example of a report sent to a kindergarten teacher in Lawrence, Kansas.

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Insert Report

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After the child's current performance has been discussed thoroughly, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for the child's first semester in kindergarten should be prepared either at the initial staff meeting or during a subsequent meeting. The preschool staff's summary report supplied information regarding the child's current abilities and typical learning rate; the kindergarten staff can report the expectations and goals typically established

for kindergarteners. By combining this information, along with goals requested by the parents, a reasonable and systematic education plan can be developed for the child.

If teachers from the two classrooms have not exchanged visits to one another's classrooms, the development of the IEP should be postponed until after such visits, as information acquired from the observations should be useful in producing a comprehensive plan. As part of the IEP, the teachers should discuss the frequency of future contact between the preschool and kindergarten after the child's transition. Regularly scheduled meetings or phone calls between the old and new staff can be an important and inexpensive form of insurance for the child, guaranteeing continuity between the child's two school experiences.

Finally, a visit to the kindergarten by the parent and child should be arranged at the meeting. This visit will provide them with an opportunity to see what kindergarten is like and how it differs from preschool. In addition, the visit may ease fears that some children (and parents) experience when moving to a new school (e.g., Klein, 1975).

During Transition

Most children begin kindergarten on the first day of school and remain in the class for the full half-day session. Many children with handicaps or special problems will begin kindergarten in the same fashion. However, alternative arrangements should be considered if the parents and teachers are concerned about the child's ability to manage a full session. Flexible scheduling may facilitate the child's active participation and adjustment. Thus,

some children might attend kindergarten for only part of the session each day during the first week or two. In this way the number of activities introduced to the child may be increased gradually from day to day. Within a few weeks the child can be attending the entire session and will be familiar with the routines and schedule of the classroom. This gradual introduction may be advisable for children with little or no previous school experience, for children with serious handicaps, and in classrooms where an adult is not available throughout the session to introduce a special child to each new activity and prompt successful participation in the activity. A teacher with 20 or more other new children may have time only to assist the special child through one new activity a day. In addition, a gradual introduction to the classroom will allow the child with special needs to master participation in each new activity, before beginning the next activity.

Alternatively, the child might begin kindergarten for the full session with the aid of an adult, who can provide extra assistance, as needed, during the first week of school (c.f., Russo & Koegel, 1977). When the child masters the new routines and becomes familiar with the activities, the adult support can be gradually withdrawn. The assisting adult might be a member of the special services team, a member of the child's former preschool staff, or another parent.

Finally, some children might begin kindergarten while maintaining half-day enrollment in the preschool. A full-day school experience may be advisable for some children and the preschool can supplement and support the child's kindergarten experience. In addition, part of the child's school world will remain familiar and stable through continued participation in the familiar preschool. Maintaining a child's coenrollment in preschool may facilitate an exchange of information between the preschool and kindergarten. The

teachers can discuss the activities and concepts being introduced in each classroom. Furthermore, a child's ability to demonstrate skills and concepts newly acquired in one classroom can be assessed in the other classroom. Skills and concepts which do not generalize to the other classroom, subsequently can be practiced and reinforced in that classroom. This exchange of information should maintain educational continuity between preschool and kindergarten as well as enhance the child's daily educational program.

After Transition

Regularly scheduled meetings or phone calls between the new and former teaching staff will assist a new teacher's efforts in creating a successful school experience for the child. Such contacts might be weekly at the beginning of school, but decrease to biweekly or monthly as the child progresses through the year of kindergarten. The purpose of such contacts by the preschool staff is threefold:

- to exchange information regarding the child;
- to convey concern regarding problems that may arise and recommendations for their solutions;
- to offer enthusiastic support for the child's (and teacher's) success.

Former teachers can appreciate the excitement that a new teacher may experience when a handicapped child masters yet another skill in the new classroom after several days of careful planning and instruction. The former teacher can offer support and enthusiasm for the child's progress, and understanding if progress in some areas becomes slow and frustrating. Likewise, suggestions based on past teaching history with the child can be provided as well as encouragement for the occasional discouraging day that all teachers face. Finally,

these contacts can provide an often absent, but much needed, opportunity for both teachers to express the frustrations as well as rewards of working with a special child.

In summary, David, the child from a special preschool class, soon will be one of many kindergarten students. David's chances for success are high, if his preschool has prepared him for the entry skills and routines of kindergarten, if the two classrooms have cooperated in planning his admission to kindergarten, and if they continue their contacts during David's adjustment to kindergarten. With this planning and the combined efforts of preschool and kindegarten professionals, David and other children like him can look forward to a successful early education and to a future in the mainstream of school experience.

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Summary Report regarding: David Smith

Birthdate: 4/18/77

From: Susan Fowler
Edna A. Hill Child Evelopment Laboratory
Haworth Hall
University of Kansas

Date of Report: 5/1/82

Referral: David was referred in October of 1980 by the Children's Center Preschool for disruptive and aggressive behavior such as tantrumming, hitting and kicking. The staff stated that the behavior occurred two to three times a day and appeared to be accelerating. They found it difficult to manage him in a group containing younger or smaller children.

Current Classroom Behavior: When David entered the Special Preschool in November, 1980, he had not yet acquired a variety of skills necessary to learn from the classroom activities. He needed reminders to: sit in a chair to be ready to work, listen to instructions, finish his work, play appropriately with other children, and follow classroom rules and the daily routine. At the beginning of December, he had an irregular pattern of good and bad days, demonstrating that he could participate appropriately sometimes.

By the end of the spring semester, David's days were consistently better. He approached the classroom routine with more assurance and was successful in the work and play periods. He learned to sit properly and to work quickly in the preacademic work period. He played well with the other children and earned privileges such as helping the teachers prepare snack, and calling children for snacks. He provided assistance during field trips by helping the younger children stay with the group.

David rarely exhibits any of the disruptive testing behaviors that we saw initially after he was referred. He is, in fact, working on more sophis-

ticated behaviors such as waiting turns quietly, working carefully at an appropriate pace, refraining from talking during work, and requesting help only when he actually needs it. David earns checkmarks for such appropriate "young man" behaviors during each of the periods of the day. It is clear that David understands the rules of this system, since he is noticeably upset when he does not earn all his checkmarks for the day.

In summary, David seems to enjoy the classroom and has developed good interaction skills. He is well-liked by both the other children and the teachers. He is an active participant in all of the classroom activities. He enjoys art activities, fine motor activities, puzzles, and building with blocks, and also enjoys large motor activities such as climbing and jumping. On the playground, he likes to run and climb and often asks other children to join him.

Academic Skills to Date:

Visual-Motor Skills: David has progressed greatly during the last nine months. He has completed the DLM plastic puzzles, the large parquetry designs, the bead sequence, and is currently working on the cube duplication, and small parquetry. He is almost finished with the puzzle sequence. The paper and pencil tasks that Michael has completed include tracing horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines and a variety of shapes including squares, rectangles, and triangles.

Math Skills: David has worked extensively with numerals one through five and been exposed to numerals through ten. He can complete numeral-object correspondence tasks accurately through five, but often makes errors with higher numbers. He can rote count to ten. David has worked primarily with manipulative math materials: counting blocks into bins labeled with a numeral, counting chips glued to strips of paper, using the Montessori number sorter.

David's mother requested that we teach him to recognize and print his first name, so a name lotto task was introduced in December of 1981. He learned the placement of the letters of his first and last name. Then he began to write his name in name boxes. He is practicing the following letters this semester; a,c,b,r,e,s, and j. He has mastered the first three but is still working on the others. David recently began printing on kindergarten style paper.

Language Concepts: David has made great strides in this area. He has completed the object lotto, color lotto, shape lotto, play scenes lotto, and DLM-motor expressive cards. He can identify the missing part on a variety of paired associtation cards. He finished the opposite concepts sequence which included the concepts hot/cold, on/off, over/under, in/out, happy/sad, dirty/clean, and up/down.

We had some difficulty understanding David's sentence structure and articulation at the beginning of school. We first worked on play scenes lottos to help him use complete sentences. Then he began the sequenced picture cards that included face washing, shower, toothbrushing, dressing, bike riding, going to school and the routine of the preschool day. He completed these sequences quickly. At the end of spring semester he was presented with a new picture each day and was asked to explain what the picture was about. His descriptions have increased in length and spontaneity. David usually fills two minutes describing details in the picture.

Other Current Tasks:

In group times, David is currently working on labeling letters of the alphabet, identifying numerals 1 to 10, and rote counting. Following instructions and taking turns was an important goal in a variety of activities and games. Go Fish, pegboards, and parquetry puzzles were used in this manner.

Favorite Toys and Activities:

David enjoys a variety of toys and activities. He plays with the climbing and jumping toys when they are available. He also enjoys building with the unit blocks and working with playdough. He likes to run, play chase, and engage in group activities during outdoor times.

Future Task Suggestions:

We suggested that David continue to work on the tasks sequences that he is currently following. Special emphasis should be placed on his math and number tasks as this is his greatest area of difficulty.

Also David should continue to receive praise and feedback for his classroom behavior. Discussions of classroom rules are still important.

Social Skills - Peers:

David works and plays well with the other children. In many activities he is a leader and a good model for the other children. On occasion David teases other children, but this has not been a severe problem.

Social Skills - Teachers:

David is friendly and polite to adults. He enjoys talking with them about a variety of subjects. He sits quietly during book-reading times with teachers. He sometimes tries to control group activities and needs to be reminded to follow the teacher's directions.

Problem Behaviors and How to Deal With Them:

David rarely displays the aggressive and disruptive behaviors for which he was referred. His current problems are more sophisticated and perhaps a result of higher expectations by the classroom staff. He sometimes works too fast and is consequently careless, talks while working, or tattles on other children. A "young man" program was developed for these behaviors. He earns a checkmark for each of the periods of the day in which he acts in a pleasant and polite manner. If he misses

no more than one checkmark in a day, he is allowed to choose a special outdoor activity or large group activity. He seems to respond well to clearly specified rules and guidelines for appropriate behavior.

Current Impressions:

We have been very pleased with David's adaptation to our classroom routines, expectations, and contingencies. He seems to respond well when expectations are clearly laid out for him and followed up with praise and other positive feedback.

Recommendations:

Should David have difficulty with social or conduct behaviors in the future, we recommend the following routine:

1. Inform him what the appropriate behaviors are, and specify behaviors he cannot do.
2. Set up regular check periods and give yes-no feedback (checkmarks, stickers) at the end of each period.
3. Tell David how many periods at end of day if enough checks earned.
4. Minimize negative feedback if he misses --emphasize, instead, trying again tomorrow.